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## **MEDITERRANEAN AFTER US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 2024: SCENARIO FOR THE NEAR FUTURE\*\*\***

### **Abstract**

American presidential elections in 2024 among other things are marked by Donald Trump's announcement regarding changes in foreign affairs. In this moment of history, which was characterized by changing world order, the Mediterranean Sea, in particular Eastern and Southern parts, and the Balkans are areas in proximity or directly affected by conflicts. The paper starts with the assumption that change in the White House would imply a certain discontinuity in their foreign policy. By implementing the Italian neoclassical geopolitical framework, the authors question the hypothesis. In line with that approach, opposition between NATO and Russia is considered as among the elites marked by diverging cultural traits and histories. The paper is divided into four parts. In order to arrive at the outcomes of the Trump scenario (new presidential mandate of Donald Trump), importance of the South and East Mediterranean and the Balkans is analyzed from the geopolitical perspective and in the view of current global reordering. Finally authors conclude that change could

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occur *vis-à-vis* Ukraine, while US politics in the Middle East would follow the current stance.

**Keywords:** Donald Trump, Mediterranean Sea, Russia, NATO, Balkans

## INTRODUCTION

The greatest close sea is crucial for the relations between Europe and North Africa, for the large chunk of transport and connections among the European Union, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and Pacific nations. Gibraltar, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, and the Suez Canal are potential choke points and, at the same time places for connections. The Balkans and Asia Minor, divided by the straits, are in between the Mediterranean and another closed sea, since 2022, a war theatre, the Black Sea. For the Black Sea countries, and in particular for Russia, as a great power and currently involved in World War Three (Janković 2023, 24–46, 222–232), and for its strategic opponent – the West led by Anglo-American elites – wider Mediterranean area play an important part for the warfare planning. Various dimensions of the World War as a total war (Kopli 2022, 35–45), implicate cultural, economic, and classical armed warfare. While Russian leadership (Chinese, too) seems to be rock solid and confirmed with the latest presidential elections<sup>1</sup> in 2024, the US presidential elections are marked by considerations of change in its strategic posture in internal and foreign policy. Hence, who will be the official host of the White House will or should also have an impact on the US Mediterranean policy (and on the war in Ukraine, too).

Donald Trump's and the team of Biden have differing stances on the war in Ukraine. Robert F. Kennedy was pushing to run, with almost null chances to win, before joining the Republican nominee. There were small chances for the establishment to allow him adequate mediatic campaign in order to challenge the current president, favored by the Democratic party (Fowler 2024).

While democratic candidate Kamala Harris or any of the Biden entourage would choose for continuity in foreign policy, Trump could

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<sup>1</sup> Putin won another landslide victory in the presidential elections in Russia in March 2024 with 87.28 percent of votes and a turnout of 73.3%. The Chinese leadership is confirmed without elections (Turato 2022; “Результаты выборов президента России. Инфографика” 2024).

potentially seek a settlement with Russia, but only regarding Ukraine. Mediterranean policy is important as it is in proximity to European war theatre, and the Middle East is part of it. The aim of the paper is to analyse whether announced changes in the case of the new Trump presidency will have an impact on US policy in the wider Mediterranean Sea area.

Addressing future trends requires understanding the position and importance that the Mediterranean and the Black Sea assume in the global confrontation (of West and East, generally speaking). The wider Mediterranean area in this text refers to the East and South Mediterranean, the Balkan Peninsula and the Middle East. The starting assumption is that if the candidate of the Democratic party or other proposed by the current US administration (2021–2025) is proclaimed as the winner, there will be continuity, while it is to be assumed that certain discontinuity is to be expected.

Foreign policy analysis is a usual framework for the study of foreign policy behaviour, it explains the making and shaping of foreign policy (see: Alden and Aran 2017; Potter 2017). Still, for the geopolitical importance of the Mediterranean, an adequate approach is also the Italian neoclassical geopolitical school adopted in this paper. It could be summed up in the lesser importance of the geographic features compared to the German classical school or that of Mackinder or Mahan understandings (Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman are the most relevant representatives of the Anglo-American classical geopolitical concepts). The resume of this approach is the primary importance of the will (*volonta'*) of the elites, imbued with a historical legacy to achieve this or that objective in the concrete territory. For example, this was the explanation for why the fascist regime wanted to revive the Roman empire or the Nazis perceived themselves as bearers of the tradition dating back to Charlemagne. Thus, geography is primarily understood through the lens of the interested actors, shaped by their cultural legacy (see: Janković 2020, 101–125).

South Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor and, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are parts of the rimland (concept of Nicholas Spykman) important for logistics through Suez by the sea and all the way toward central Asia by continental roads. When it comes to actual conflict for the new distribution of power at the global scale Asia Minor and the Straits are already strategically positioned for the Russian operations in Syria and, generally, its Mediterranean presence. The potential importance of the mentioned areas for the Western coalition

(USA, UK, and EU countries that send bellicose material and operators of modern military equipment) lies in the fact that Ukraine is continentally linked to the West through Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania and by the sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Sometimes, the Bulgarian and Romanian Black Sea coast is important ground for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion toward the East and, in particular, in the strategy of controlling this closed sea since 2004. Thus, the Mediterranean is of more importance for Russia than it is for the US. However, Russian presence in the Middle East and in Africa in part depends on the free navigation in the Mediterranean (Syria and Libya). Russian military presence in the air bases in Libya, Central African Republic, Mali and Burkina Faso, with the availability of the Air Base in Niger's Niamey partly overcomes the limits imposed for the Russian military fleet.<sup>2</sup> This is a modified way of using the airpower (Budimir 2020, 125–172).

In the concrete case, the opposition between NATO and Russia is not primary or only geographic as opposition between thalassocratic power (US, UK, and NATO as their extension) and continental power (Russian bear), but between the elites having different cultural traits and histories of claim on this or that territory. The British are interested in not permitting the Russians to control the Black Sea and, therefore, the Straits because they are afraid of the strength and resources of the power controlling the continental mass having the possibility to build a strong navy and downgrade their status of a naval power (which China did). American elites want to maintain and augment their planetary reach using territorial features of their allied or subordinate (Lake 2009, 14–15) countries. Anglo-Americans consider Russia as a cultural, i.e., ideological enemy, and China as a strategic rival (Huntington 1993; Naročnicka 2008; Jankovic 2023; Shatzer 2022, 136). This is why the opposition does not exhaust itself at levels of diplomacy, economy, and armed warfare. Confrontation is total. This totality implies that the fronts run along fields of classical cultural and societal relations in the East or postmodern in the West. That explains the limits imposed on the study and popularization of Russian high culture (literature, ballet, concerts of classical music) in some EU countries.

Russian governing elite historically considers all or most of Ukraine as part of its own culture, and at the same time wants to assure safe

<sup>2</sup> One might assume that Russia also uses civilian cargo ships to transport material through the Black Sea (see: Sutton 2023; Avia 2020).

passage for Russia's military navy through the straits to the Mediterranean. Similarly, Polish elite ambitions based on the history of their modern kingdom and conquests of the part of modern Belarus and Ukraine are used in order to promote social anti-Russian mobilization in that country. This historical experience used by the elites relying on national culture to shape objectives in foreign policy is adapted to geographic traits.

## **GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES FOR THE US AND RUSSIA**

Geopolitical features are susceptible to change in a way in which technology shrinks the distances or may underline or diminish the importance of the terrain, demography and, other elements. On the other hand, the will to use geopolitical characteristics, like the Houthi's usage of the Bab el Mandeb Strait to influence Israel and its allies' economies, demonstrates relevance of the Italian neoclassical geopolitical approach.

### **The Balkans**

The Balkan Peninsula, or Southeastern Europe has a triangular shape with a negative demographic trend between Central Europe (Danube River) and the seas. It is some 1300 km wide, in the north and 480 km only from Thessaloniki on the coast of the Aegean Sea to the town of Smederevo on the right bank of the Danube River. Scarce demographic weight (around 50 million people), and economic, too, make this part of the continent less attractive for big investments, but the geopolitical location between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and the transport connection to Asia Minor reveal its current significance in the global turmoil.

National liberation movements and rebellions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the interest of several great power countries in the Balkans, and the rise of unipolar US policy in the 1990s shaped the contemporary map of this part of Europe. The renaissance of Russia as a great power and the eruption of the military front of the Third World War (WWIII) in the eastern European plains requires a new analysis of the Balkan locus in great power politics.

Primary importance for Russia traditionally lies in control of the straits and of the Black Sea shores. Thus, friendly relations of Moscow

with Romania and Bulgaria with their maritime coast are objective of Russia. Still, both of the countries are NATO members and diversely active against Russia through weapons and other military aid for the Ukrainian Army or through conscriptions of the so-called volunteers – actually of mercenaries.<sup>3</sup> Balkan heartland, with Serbia and Serbian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) assumes additional importance looking for Moscow a) diplomatically: as European countries and territories resisting the Anti-Russian policies, and b) from the point of view of geostrategy, as potential territory from which it is possible to partially withhold part of the military pressure on Ukrainian front in eventuality of the open NATO-Russia war.

Looking from Washington, control of the Balkan shores, crucial for maritime transport is assured and part of the inland roads remains only potentially unstable, due to the Serbian factor. Still, NATO is linked through the Partnership for Peace program, the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) agreement with Serbia (in 2015, Tanjug 2015) and the organisation of joint military drills. The perception of the potential for Russia to expand the ties with the Serbs and reach the Danube River probably could make two separate types of moves of US: 1) negotiation with Russia in order to settle the conflict before the eventual propagation of war into Moldavia, 2) instigation of Moldavia as a non-NATO member to enter the military conflict by attacking the Transnistria. That could inflame the public settlement in neighbouring Romania, an interested actor in the political future of the former Soviet Republic of Moldova.

Namely, support of NATO for Ukraine through weapons as aid (Pellicciari 2022, 69) needs multiple logistic's routes. The Russian route from Herson to Odesa will affect the status of Moldova. In that case, control of Balkan routes and the peninsula as a platform of anti/aerial and of offensive actions will be of additional importance due to the fact that it lies on Danube River and is bordering Romania. The official presence of NATO soldiers in Ukraine (French Legion Étrangers) utterly fuels the war and additionally reinforces the possibility of the extension of war further to the West.

Control of the Greek coast and islands is equally, or of similar importance as availability of using the Straits and control of the Black Sea shores of Asia Minor for the logistics or military and commercial

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<sup>3</sup> Romanian mercenaries were in the first months of the war second only to Poland with the number of fighters alongside the Ukrainian forces (see: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation 2022; Snider 2024).

supplies. In the Trump administration bilateral ties were boosted in opposition to Turkey. Maritime routes pass after the Straits through the Greek exclusive economic zone in the Aegean Sea. An important land route, via Egnatia connects Albanian port to Dures to Constantinopoli, and another one starts from Athens and Thessaloniki following the valleys of Vardar and Morava rivers until Belgrade and the Danube River.

The Danube River is potentially suitable for the transport of goods necessary in warfare, with only inconvenience for NATO that it runs through military-neutral country of Serbia. The road network still misses adequate connections between the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea, except for the Egnatia highway through northern Greece. The highway connecting the ports of Rijeka and Trieste, and Belgrade (road distance is 553 km, and direct distance is 477 km) still has only a motorway until Romania, and the road connecting the Albanian port of Dures and the Black Sea is far from over.

Southeastern Europe or better said, Balkan politics and, in particular, geopolitical position was an often studied issue in the 1990s and afterward in the first years after the NATO aggression on the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see: Guskova 2001; Гуськова 2013). Research in different aspects of international criminal law kept the Balkans interesting due to the process in the Hague Tribunal (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [ICTY]), which served as a laboratory for the disciplinary politics against rebellious countries and peoples. Occasional outbursts of the fragile situation in the Peninsula and its geostrategic position between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, between the Danube River and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, including episodes of Greek-Turkish diplomatic confrontation and tensions around the status of autonomous Serbian entity inside *de facto* confederally conceived Bosnia and Herzegovina is an indicator of potential for instability in this micro-region. The focus of European politics in media and in diplomacy shifted towards Ukraine at least since 2004 and on the Caucasus, which is periodically reactivated as one of regions in which Russia is challenged by the West (Gabellini 2012). The position of Southeastern Europe in the current global confrontation is definitely behind the frontlines. Membership in NATO and position on the Ukraine war reveal total NATO control of the shores with the exception of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska/Bosnia and Herzegovina in the heartland of this part of Europe. Serbs are again the only ones not following the full program dictated by the West military (NATO) and civil arm (EU) (Map

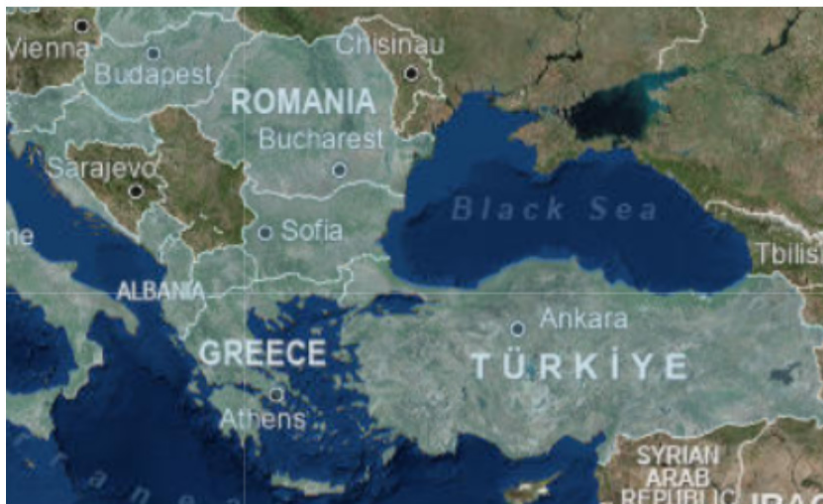


1 representing NATO control of the Peninsula shores and the Serbian territories in the heartland).

In line with the need to assure logistic supply for the Ukrainian front, NATO announced: “Strengthening our ability to move, reinforce, supply, and sustain our forces to respond to threats across the Alliance, including through effective and resilient logistics and the development of mobility corridors. Training, exercising, and integrating NATO’s Forward Land Forces into the new plans, including by continuing to strengthen our forward defences on NATO’s Eastern Flank (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] 2024).”

As of July 2024, two new mobility corridors have been announced. One is Greece-Bulgaria-Romania *Harmonized Military Mobility Corridor* (Комарин 2024). The second is envisaged along the Pan-European Transport Corridor VIII, between Albania, Bulgaria, Italy, and North Macedonia. These four countries signed a Letter of Intent for cross-border military mobility cooperation (Pavikjevikj 2024).

Map 1: NATO control of the Balkan shores with Serbian lands in the peninsulas heartland



Map by S. Jankovic, CC BY (edition of the map taken from [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)).

Announcement of building important antiaircraft and antiballistic military NATO base in Romania, and others in Bulgaria and Albania are part of the larger reinforcement of US military presence in the Balkans. Before, US negotiated with these countries to reinvigorate the cooperation in defense with the Hellenic Republic, according to the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (U.S. Department of State 2020a), with the



possibility to use 23 locations, in particular bases of Souda, Stefanovikeio, Larissa, and the port of Alexandroupolis. Previously, the US relied much more on territory of Turkey and the Incirlik air base. But, in June 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reportedly threatened to close it (Jones 2019). Port of Alexandroupolis is strategically located close to the Straits and in proximity to the Black Sea and the Gas Interconnector Greece–Bulgaria (Serbia Energy 2024).

### Asia Minor

The position of Turkey changed after the end of the Cold War with the advent of ambitious Turkish non-Kemalist political elites in governing positions, with regional autonomy and ambitious neo-ottoman policy (Yavuz 2016, 438–465; Trifković 2011; Tanasković 2011). Positioned between two continents and as a land mass between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea today, it connects Syria with Russia and important gas routes from the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe. Previously principally set as a rimland southeastern flank of NATO, it achieved substantial autonomy trading favours with the United States and Russia. Turkey has the strongest NATO army in Europe, second eventually only to France. At the same time, it is acting in between with strong interests to maintain a balanced position. This allows the Turkish government to sell the drones to the Ukrainian Army and not to align with the US-proposed sanctions against Russia.

Asia Minor is in the form of a rectangle. In fact, it is a natural land bridge with additional advantage of being on the straits, whose control is strategic not only for the Ukrainian front, but for the maritime food trade also, as Russia and Ukraine are internationally among the top exporters of grain. Mastodont pretensions of the Anglo-American elite with their insatiable appetite for global enslavement or control, although not feasible are still characterizing the apparatus and the *modus operandi* of strategic thinking in the upper echelons of the Western alliance. Think tanks and research centres formulate policy papers and analyses out of which will emerge the document. One such think tank is The Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, which proposed the Black Sea strategy for NATO (Atlantic Council 2023). Text is classically presumptuous as if the unipolar moment still endures and the US is the light bearer. North Atlantic Alliance and US interests are, of course (in the document) in the Black Sea (and in that sense, all over the universe), and control of the

shores is necessary for Euro-Atlantic security (*sic* in Atlantic Council 2023). Namely, “Russian aggression in the Black Sea region threatens the security of every Black Sea state and the Euro-Atlantic region as a whole, as well as global food security, international economic stability, and the viability of international legal frameworks.” (Atlantic Council 2023). In the minds of Washington planners there is no single region in the world directly linked to the ‘Euro-Atlantic region’. Would the Trump government change this?

Currently, the US is *de facto* engaged in the war at the Ukrainian front, initiated by the previous administration, through its proxy represented in the Ukrainian Army, and through the provision of training, armaments, and its mercenaries. These logistics in the form of foreign aid changed the scope and the relations of international aid and among donor and recipient countries. As Pellicciari argues, “There has been an enormous quantity of diversified aid concentrated mostly on new areas of intervention (financial, political-institutional, military), relegating traditional humanitarian aid to second place” (Pellicciari 2024, 7). Weapons asked for by the recipient country and financing of it became the principal part of the aid (Pellicciari 2024, 7; 82–85). Black Sea shores of the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor are thus considered through the prism of field operation control. Washington supported and pushed its partners to maintain and enforce sanctions against Moscow. Militarisation of the shores through the establishment of a series of new military bases in Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece should a) ensure supplies for the operations in south Russian or Ukrainian plains, b) provide the defence shield for the Central and Western Europe and c) provide the basis for eventual offensive operations against Russian territory, augmenting American and NATO threat capabilities. A new approach of Washington is seemingly that of rapprochement in the broader strategy of dismantling the globalist mechanisms, built after WWII.

In order to assure the three mentioned military objectives US planners wanted to control political processes and impose the reforms leading to the creation of an environment hostile to eventual internal and, subsequently, foreign political change of behaviour. Ideological reforms are thus of strategic importance. This political position, previously endorsed by the US government, changes with the new Trump presidency, but only as far regards the previous focus on Europe.

## East and South Mediterranean

The Middle East and North Africa region by large corresponds to the south and east Mediterranean, plus the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Jordan, and Iran. Major changes in the foreign positioning of great powers and their influence are occurring in this part of the Mediterranean. Four out of five new BRICS members since January 2024 are Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates), and the fifth is Ethiopia. For a short period, until Russian intervention in Syria (2015), US hegemony was disputed only by Tehran and Damascus, from 1990 to 2015 (Janković 2019). New partnerships with Russia and China are changing the regional positioning previously framed in the NATO-aligned Istanbul cooperation initiative (since 2004).

The slow disengagement of the US from the wider region (from Iraq, with the return of limited forces in 2014, and from Afghanistan in 2021), was paralleled with the US push for the process of the diplomatic recognition of Jewish state by Arab countries during the Trump administration (the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco), which was announced in the Trump's deal of the century in January 2020 (U.S. Department of State 2020b). The first step in that direction started outside the region, with the Washington agreement on economic normalization between Serbia and the so-called Kosovo<sup>4</sup> at the beginning of September 2020, which included mutual recognition of Israel and the Muslim majority self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo, led by secessionist forces in the Serbian southern province (Mirović 2020; Đorđević and Davidov 2022). The plan to create a safer environment for Israel in the region through diplomatic channels in the situation of the rising importance of Russia and China in the Middle East and North Africa came into question with the Israeli retaliative war on Gaza.<sup>5</sup>

In the background of the Ukrainian war, and in the proximity of the Gaza war, Mohamed Al Orabi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt in November 2023 predicted chaos „if new president who is not believer in two-state solution” (*sic*) comes into office in Washington

<sup>4</sup> All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of United Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Russia reemerged as a great power with interventions in Syria and in Libya to continue to spread its influence in the Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa afterward, but also through energy agreements with Turkey (see: France info 2022; Fukutomi 2023; Mitić 2022; 2024; Janković 2023, 322–327).

(and he attends it).<sup>6</sup> Houthi actions in the Red Sea and even against commercial ships in the Indian Ocean are damaging the maritime trade through the Suez Canal. War in Gaza and its spin-off in bombings and artillery attacks between IDF and Hezbollah are fomenting the wider war in the region.

## TRUMP SCENARIO

British scholar Ruth Deyermond, highly critical *vis-à-vis* Russia, claims that Trump's presidency was unusual and even irrational (as opposed to rational warmongering policy of the political West is to be assumed). In this partisan analysis where Russia is the aggressor, Trump "administration's policy on Russian aggression in Ukraine was not merely flawed or inconsistent over time, it was profoundly incoherent" (Deyermond 2023, 1609). Deyermond noted correctly that "[F]undamental aspects of policy concerning Russian aggression in Ukraine – the status of Crimea, or whether and how Russia should be punished for its aggression, for example – were called into question by the actions of administration members (most frequently the president) after they had been set out in key documents, press releases or speeches," (Deyermond 2023, 1600) and that is why there is a need to look beyond official documents in order to understand the decisions. Thus, the posture of the US toward the Mediterranean area cannot be deduced from official documents, and even not all of the official statements by the State Department are to point to the direction, which US policy could take in the case of the next Trump presidency. Although Trump's rhetoric is different towards Russia, his stance was in line with the Obama administration regarding China. What remains are Trump's speeches and his comments on the NATO, Russia, Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe. Non-diplomatic, American business, non-formal style approach characterized even the public speeches (White House 2019).

Campaign of fear against the reelection of the businessman once famous as the host of *The Apprentice*, TV Show, among the Natists – his political opponents – shares the claim that Trump is a threat to them (Fix and Kimmage 2024). In a campaign speech held in Detroit on Saturday, June 15 2024, Trump said that he would settle the practice of Zelensky taking US money every time he visits the States (C Span 2024). Fiona

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<sup>6</sup> Mohamed al Orabi, Online Lecture via Zoom, November 2023, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

Hill, a Council of Foreign Affairs member and one of the advisers on the presidential staff, commented on Trump as having the same idea on Ukraine as Russian President Putin (Pengelli 2024). Part of the mediatic campaign against Trump's policy was that he lacked expertise with regard to the peace plan for Ukraine, which he did not reveal personally but was alluded to by Hungarian President Victor Orban and others. According to them the plan to "solve the war in 24 hours," "consists of pressuring Ukraine into giving up Crimea and the Donbas in exchange for a peace deal" (Rohac and Droin 2024).

Trump's pick of young Ohio senator J. D. Vance may point to more Biden/Harris period-like policies toward Ukraine. If money talks, then support for the nominated candidate for the position of Vice President would say that drone production and involvement in Ukraine front means continuity (Webb 2024). As far regards the support for Israel in the Middle East there are no reasons to believe that some U-turn would occur, in particular as Trump was the one to promote the 'deal of the century' a plan of essentially recognizing Israel in turn for some hazy perspective of Palestinian so-called state, as that entity would have sovereignty only as much Israel would approve with possibility to *de facto* temporarily revoke it through military incursions.<sup>7</sup>

As far regards Iran and the MENA region in general, any US administration will follow a policy that could not in any way do any harm to Israeli national interests. This would mean keeping the ties with those Arab countries that would guarantee diplomatic and security guarantees for the Jewish state. More concretely, it would translate into maintaining military support and cooperation with Cairo, continued cooperation and support for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and good relations with Morocco. Relations with the Arabian Peninsula would depend on the general great power's confrontation or cooperation, as Chinese and Russian influence and the general importance of the BRICS in the region grows.

Small, and at the same time, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous Balkans were not in the focus of the administration, but employees from

<sup>7</sup> "Conditional on Palestinians recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, rejecting and combatting what Israel considers "terror in all its forms," and accepting special arrangements providing for Israel's security needs—including Israel's right to conduct security operations within the Palestinian state. The plan also requires Palestinians to grant Israel responsibility for security and control over all air space west of the Jordan River" (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies [ACRPS] 2020).

the State Department sought to ‘deliver’ solutions, to settle the issue of Kosovo by supporting the “border correction” or a land swap deal which would, as they planned and hoped for, be accepted by Belgrade and Pristina.<sup>8</sup> However, this ‘deal’ was not concluded. The Balkans, at the moment assumes importance in relation to Ukraine and in relation to Asia Minor. Military corridors toward the Black Sea and the Ukraine will continue to be of strategic interest for the Pentagon and the State Department. Whether Trump would try to unsettle the “swamp” by changing foreign policy or, more likely, by internal – identity politics, he will have limited possibility and will to change US policies toward the Peninsula.

## CONCLUSION

Is the chaos Mohamed al Orabi mentioned, at least reserved for the Middle East, as opposed to some orderly situation? The transition of the order at the world level has been evident ever since then liberal-democratic Western elites won the Cold War and started shifting politics and economics toward the end of history. This drive on the road with no turnings right or left, hit a dead end, and new roads are still optional. One of them with apocalyptic scenario.

Internal change in the US would temporarily try to mitigate processes leading to the new multipolar order marked by crisis and conflicts in its formative period. The emphasis of Trump on bilateral initiatives and announced intention to settle the issues that feed the ‘deep state’ indicate a lesser propensity for wars and international crisis, at least as far regards European theatres.

Different arrangement awaits the South and East Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East and the Balkans. US policy in these regions will be characterized by both continuity and change in the case of Trump’s victory. Support for Israel as *sine qua non* of US foreign policy shapes the regional approach more than any geopolitical characteristic (see: Janković 2019). Trump administration would not be strategically different in that region, trying to push Arab countries to put aside the troubled Palestinian issue by dividing the issue of Jerusalem from the fate of local Arab population. Israel with rightwing government would count on the

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<sup>8</sup> This initiative was backed by US administration and negotiated by the Serbian and the so-called president of Kosovo, Hashim Taci (see: Walker and MacDowall 2018).

continued support against Iran if it succeeds in dragging the Iranians into a more open and wider conflict. It would mean continuity with the current situation. Possibly, it could feed the fire with gasoline. The statement of Trump after the Iranian retaliatory attack with ballistic missiles against Israel, was to strike the nuclear facilities in Iran (Bickerton 2024). This propagandistic announcement seems to be intended as a critique of the Democratic-led White House and competition for the support of the Israel lobby in the US.

This behaviour would in turn reward China and Russia. They could further be profiled as a more credible mediator in local conflicts. Turkey or the policy toward the Asia Minor will depend on the aftermath of Erdoğan. Trump would not challenge current settings in which Turkey is an isolated island of stability. If the repercussions of the efforts to finish the war in Ukraine, would mean renewed American influence in the Arab Peninsula, full support to Israel would prevent the US from renewing its influence in the Arab countries.

Lower interest in the Balkans leaves somewhat more space for other actors' initiatives. That situation could ease American pressure in the region and presupposes the potential for eventual stronger Russian influence in non-NATO members. Essentially what could change is the approach, from proactive to reactive Balkan politics of the USA.

Finally, the world war, of which the main reason is the spread of NATO and the imposition of the Western model of governance and economy, will be challenged in the US. The outcome of that internal struggle will shape continued confrontation or seeking a pause and the new rearrangement of the spheres of influence (Trump scenario).

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## **МЕДИТЕРАН ПОСЛЕ ПРЕДСЕДНИЧКИХ ИЗБОРА У САД 2024: СЦЕНАРИО ЗА БЛИСКУ БУДУЋНОСТ\*\*\***

### **Резиме**

Амерички председнички избори су, између осталог, обележени најавом Доналда Трампа о променама у спољној политици. У овом историјском тренутку, који карактерише измена светског поретка, Средоземно море, посебно источни и јужни делови, као и Балкан су области у близини или су непосредно погођени сукобима. Чланак започиње са претпоставком да би промена у Белој кући имплицирала одређени степен дисконтинуитета у спољној политици. Аутори испитују ову претпоставку користећи се италијанском неокласичном геополитичком мишљу као теоријским оквиром. У складу са овим приступом, опозиција између НАТО и Русије се сагледава кроз елите које обележавају разлике у културном обрасцу и историји. Рад је подељен у четири дела. Како би се дошло до резултата Трамповог сценарија (новог председничког мандата Доналда Трампа), значај јужног и источног Средоземља, те Балкана је анализирана у геополитичкој перспективи, имајући у виду актуално глобално преуређење. У последњем делу се закључује да се промена може десити у погледу Украјине, али

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\*\*\* Рад је настао у оквиру истраживачког пројекта „Србија и изазови у међународним односима 2024. године“, који финансира Министарство науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије, а реализује Институт за међународну политику и привреду у Београда, током 2024. године.

би, што се тиче Блиског истока, политика Сједињених Држава следила тренутну политику.

**Кључне речи:** Доналд Трамп, Средоземље, Русија, НАТО, Балкан

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\* Овај рад је примљен 30. октобра 2024. године, а прихваћен на састанку редакције 14. априла 2025. године.